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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the proposition that education of Black children should reflect Black culture and child-rearing practices. It is suggested that Black children need an educational system which recognizes and reflects their strengths, their abilities and their culture and also provides them with the tools necessary to survive in the dominant Anglo-American culture. The paper suggests that many Black cultural patterns have their roots in West Africa and that social isolation in America has allowed these patterns to survive. It is suggested that two of the strongest influences have been a strong religious orientation and an emphasis on feelings and interpersonal relationships. Sex role and behavior pattern socialization have been affected by both the African heritage as well as by the parents' conceptions of the realities of growing up in an Anglo-American society. An emphasis on positive self-concept and achievement motivation reflects this conception. It is suggested that the Black culture reflects a person, as opposed to an object, orientation. These cultural patterns are subsequently reflected in learning styles and thought patterns. The paper concludes that the child's cultural and social heritage and subsequent learning styles must be considered in planning effective educational practices. (BD)

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CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON LEARNING STYLES OF AFRO-AMERICAN CHILDREN

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

He who controls images controls minds and he who controls minds has little or nothing to fear from bodies. This is the reason why Black people are not educated or are miseducated in America.

The system could not exist if it did not multiply discrimination.

It is no accident that there is a blackout on the Black man's contribution to American history.

An educator in a system of oppression is either a revolutionary or an oppressor.

The question of education for Black people in America is a question of life and death. It is a political question, a question of power.

Struggle is a form of education. Perhaps the highest form.

Lerone Bennett

The American educational system has a dual purpose for educating Black children. The first is socialization into accepting the value system, history and culture of Anglo-Americans. The second is education for economic productivity. Black children are treated like commodities who are imbued with skills which are bought and sold on the labor market for the profit of the capitalists.

The educator in the struggle for liberation also has dual purposes for educating the oppressed. The two purposes of education for the liberator are education for struggle and education for survival.

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Education for struggle has a consciousness raising function for Black people. This facet of education tells us:

who we are
who the enemy is
what he is doing to us
when to fight
when to stop fighting
what to struggle for
what form the struggle must take

Education for struggle must change the kind of Black person who is produced by the American educational system. Carter G. Woodson wrote that Black people have been "miseducated" into confusing their interests with those of the dominant society.

Education for struggle is long range because Black people must become prepared to make a contribution to a struggle that began centuries before they were born and which will extend for centuries after their deaths. Most of the alternative schools that arose during the sixties were addressing "education for struggle." They were concerned with ideology, culture, values, and defining and implementing "Black education." That is important.

However, this paper is addressed to the issue of the eighties, which is education for <u>survival</u>. This facet of education for liberation is the <u>tooling</u> function of education. As we struggle for self-determination, we must be prepared to survive in this system in which we find ourselves. Therefore, it is important that we address the fact that our children are not being effectively educated and are being mis-educated in the schools of this nation. Black children must achieve competency in mastering the tools of this culture if they are to survive.

In this paper is presented a discussion of my present research which may provide information on how Black children learn and what

we can do to educate them more effectively.

When this society attempts to come to grips with the difficulty it is facing in educating Black children, two solutions are considered. One solution is busing Black children to white suburbs to create a racial mixture in the schools. The assumption is that Black children's educational achievement will improve by their being educated alongside white children. The other solution is to bring compensatory education to schools where there is a high concentration of lower-income Black children. Baratz and Baratz (1969:401) call this "putting larger doses of the same medicine in a new bottle."

Neither of these solutions has been very effective. First of all, the Black community objects to the implicit assumption of the first solution, that something about sitting next to a white child improves the educational achievement of a Black child. The second solution is no more creative. Most compensatory education programs begin with the assumption that Black children are inferior. It makes no difference whether that inferiority is attributed to genetics or culture. All cultures that do not conform to the patterns of the dominant Anglo-American pattern are considered deficient. Moreover, because of the "melting pot" orientation in this country, social scientists have been slow to concede the existence of distinct cultures in this country, let alone to consider their existence anything other than a deficiency. Once there was a recognition of cultural differences, the "melting pot" orientation came into play and a blanket term was again assigned to define minorities. So, diverse groups were then "melted" into a group labeled variously, "the disadvantaged," "the culturally

deprived," or "the culturally different."

It is hypothesized that Black children grow up in a distinct culture. Black children need an educational system that recognizes their strengths, their abilities, and their culture and incorporates them into the learning process.

The aim of the present research is to describe the culture of the Black community and demonstrate its effect on the learning styles of Black children. It is hypothesized that there are characteristics that are peculiar to Black culture which have their roots in West Africa and that have implications for the way in which Black children learn and think.

As we consider the issue of whether there is a distinct culture that is shared by Black people in this country, we need to begin by reviewing the question of whether our African heritage was destroyed during slavery.

Orlando Patterson (1972:29) has suggested that there are three ways of viewing Black history. The first is the catastrophic view. This view maintains that Black history in the New World is a long list of disasters and horrors caused by white oppression. This point of view is reflected in the writing of E. Franklin Frazier, Malcolm X and Nathan Hare. Primarily, they have discussed the effects of oppression on Blacks.

The second point of view is contributionism. This view is concerned with the Black man's contributions to civilization. This approach, traditionally talked about the contribution to American civilization. But most play down the American contribution as irrelevant because America is regarded as a "sinking" ship. Instead, they head for the civilization "big time"...Carthage

and Egypt and 'great' civilizations of North Africa and the Near East. The overwhelming drift of Black historical consciousness today is toward the grand version of contributionism.

The third perspective is called survivalist. This view does not deny the horrors of slavery, but sees the Black man as having triumphed in maintaining his African roots, in spite of a destructive and hostile environment. The major proponent of this view was a white American anthropologist Melville Herskovits.

I would like to consider the survivalist perspective in the present discussion. If we are going to establish the fact that Black people have a unique culture, we must look at whether the African heritage was destroyed during slavery, and, if transmitted, what the mechanisms of retention and transmission were.

It is interesting to note that when Herskovits did his work in the 1930's, it was not well received by the Black or the white communities. Herskovits wrote that "scholars did not search for Africanisms in the behavior of Black people because the African experience was defined as disgraceful." This society had perpetuated the myth that Africans had no culture or civilization and were swinging through trees eating each other. They taught Black Americans that they had attained the highest level of culture by having been brought to America and having been civilized by the white man. In an article that was written in 1890, N.S. Shaler suggested that a worthwile research question might be to measure the size of the <u>brain</u> of a native African and compare it to the size of the brain of a Black American to determine whether the Black American's brain has grown from his association with the white man.

So, with this kind of attitude on the part of the broader culture, Black people were not interested in Africa and preferred not to be reminded of their African heritage.

Herskovits (1938: 93) shares my perspective in the implications he saw of his work. He wrote,

> . . . when, for instance, one sees vast programs of Negro education undertaken without the slightest consideration being given to even the possibility of some retention of African thought and speech that might influence the Negroes' reception of the instruction thus offered, one cannot but ask how we hope to reach the desired objective. When we are confronted with psychological studies of race relations made in utter ignorance of characteristic African patterns of motivation and behavior, or with sociological analyses of Negro family life which make not the slightest attempt to take into account even the chance that the phenomena being studied might in some way have been influenced by the carry over of certain African traditions.

Herskovits first establishes the fact that Black people on this continent came primarily from West Africa. This is based on the following evidence:

1) African retentions are most evident in the Black communities of Dutch Guiana, Jamaica, Haiti, Brazil and Cuba. Intensive study of their place names, religious rites, names of gods and customs of a social and political nature shows that they can be traced to West Africa.(1963:22).

2) Analysis of the manifests of slaving ships at the ports of Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia show the numbers of slaves carried by each vessel and the ports from which this human cargo was obtained. These data show, as Herskovits states, that the

> Negroes brought to America were in the main of West African descent. For the most part, they were bought or captured

> along the West Coast and the Guinea Negroes were by far the most numerous, constituting well over fifty per cent of the total importation (1936:23).

He states further that even if Blacks were brought later from other areas, the new arrivals would be acculturated into the behavior styles of the Blacks who were already here.

3) In looking for retentions among Blacks in the United States, Herskovits states that it will be most fruitful to study those who are lower-class because those who are in the more privileged sectors of the society have more access to the cultural resources of the dominant group and the retentions are less pure. In the United States, in addition to the differences that are made by sociceconomic status, there are geographical differences. One of the fertile areas for observing Africanisms in the United States are in some areas of South Carolina and Georgia. However, most retentions in the United States are not evident in pure form, but are reinterpreted because of our acculturation to this society. So, the student of retentions must raise his research efforts from the elementary level of description and comparison to the more sophisticated analysis of process (1951:123-47).

I will not attempt in this limited space to explore all of the analysis offered by Herskovits (1958). But it may be instructive to review a laundry list of aspects of our culture that reflect Africanisms:

Funerals

Magic

Uncle Remus stories similar to the sacred myths of Africa

Call and response between performer and audience

Dance

Song

Motor Habits

Walking
speaking
laughing
sitting
postures
burden carrying
dancing
singing
hoeing and movements made in various industrial techniques

Ways of dressing hair -- wrapping, braiding, cornrowing

Wearing of headkerchiefs, scarves

Ettiquette

1) addressing older people as "uncle" or "aunt" -- treatment with respect of old folks, ancestors.

2) turning the head when laughing, putting the hand over the mouth, or in speaking to elders or other respected persons of averting the eyes and perhaps the face. It was thought that among Black children, turning the head was a sign of inattention, but when considering its West African roots, it is interpreted to be a mark of respect.

3) Call and response between performer and audience.

Concept of time
Approximations of time rather than punctuality - c.p. time

Cooperation and sharing

Child rearing practices
Whipping

Adoption of children

Myths about abnormal births in the folklore of Africa and southern United States

Child naming practices

Religious expressive styles

Conception of the devil

Herskovits (1958:86-103) also dispels the myth that Black people accepted slavery. He recounts the numerous suicides, infant homicides, mutilation of crops, and participating in slave revolts. A people who struggled against their slave status, he argues would be very likely to hold onto and transmit their heritage.

There is considerable evidence that supports the view that Black people have been so isolated in this society that they have been able to participate in a distinctive culture. This is particularly true of the poor.

Johnson and Sanday (1971:137) studied the present day Black community. Their research supports the findings that Black people are sufficiently isolated in this society to preserve and transmit cultural patterns. They found certain themes that they felt characterize Blacks. They state that Black people, unlike white people have a central theme of survival.

Robin Williams (1964:236) writes,

> Blacks tend to belong to all-Negro churches, voluntary organizations, information groups, and to experience the bulk of their social interaction with other local Blacks, despite possible inter-racial contacts in their work, school and shopping life.

There is much evidence in the literature that membership in the Black subsociety has an effect on a wide range of behavior. For example, Henderson (1967:138) presents data to show that Black youths tend to perform very much alike on such measures of social performance as educational achievement, law-violating behavior, aspirations and perceptions of life chances. Even when they compared Black youth from poverty and nonpoverty families, single-parent homes with two-parent homes, the trend among Blacks persisted when compared to whites. They concluded that the most valid

variable was participating in the Black cultural system.

Johnson and Sanday (1971:140) state further that one of the defining characteristics between Black and white people is the differential access each group has to the resources of the society. The white subculture which has free access, has created two social systems or structural arrangements of people in the American society--one Black and one white. This is exemplified by a racially segregated school system, the fact that Blacks live on a subsistence economy and whites live in a monetary economy, and several systems of law enforcement.

Henderson (1967: 139) suggests further that there are several forces that keep the Black cultural system intact and these are racial, mental, physical and social isolation. The system is set up so that contact between the races is minimal. This system is maintained by the external design of the system and also by internal factors operating within the Black community to maintain the cohesiveness.

Now that I have presented evidence that suggests that Black people participate in a distinctive culture, let us now consider the body of literature that maintains that one's culture affects the way one learns and thinks.

Stodolsky and Lesser (1967:546) suggest that most social scientists are incorrect when they assume that the educational difficulties of minority groups will be eliminated by providing lower-class families with the things a middle-class family has--better jobs, education and housing. They maintain that ethnic groups have different intellectual abilities regardless of social-class level.

They (1967:563) conducted a study of four ethnic groups: Chinese, Jewish, Black and Puerto Rican. The children were in the first grade. Each ethnic group was divided into middle- and lower-class, as well as male and female. Four mental abilities were studied. They were: verbal ability, reasoning, number facility, and space conceptualization. They found distinctive differences between the ethnic groups. Even though there was some variation caused by social class, the basic pattern of the ethnic group persisted. This finding was very surprising because educators have long maintained that social class was a more crucial factor than ethnic group membership for such factors as child rearing practices, aspirations, achievement and motivation.

1) On verbal ability, the Jewish children ranked first, Black second, Chinese third and Puerto Rican fourth.

2) On space conceptualization, the Chinese ranked first, Jews second, Puerto Ricans third and Blacks fourth (p. 567).

Even though ethnic differences were greater than social class differences, Black middle-class children differed from Black lower-class children to a greater extent than the middle- and lower-class of other groups.

They found also that the scores of the four groups of middle-class children were more similar to each other than the scores of the four groups of lower-class children. This lends support to Herskovits' suggestion that differences in culture are apt to be more striking among lower-class members of an ethnic group because they are not as assimilated (p. 567-571).

There are three questions that have been raised regarding this research that can direct future efforts:

(1) What effect do these mental ability patterns have on school achievement.

a. Is there one pattern of mental abilities that produces superior school performance.

b. Are different patterns associated with superior school performance?

c. Or are different patterns associated with superior school performance in different subject matter areas?

d. If one best pattern is identified, should the child's abilities be shaped so that this pattern is produced or should the educational program be adjusted to fit the strengths and weaknesses of the child.

(2) How long do these patterns last? Do they change as a child matures? Does going to school change the ethnic-group pattern?

(3) How can educators match teaching strategies to the child's patterns of mental abilities? (p. 578-580)

This research suggests some necessary changes in the whole conception of compensatory education. Instead of trying to elevate lower-class minority children to the middle-class as an end-all, we probably need to understand his ethnic culture and adapt the education he receives so that it matches the way he learns.

Let us consider child-rearing practices in the Black community that may give rise to unique learning styles. Dr. Nobles suggests that although the child-rearing practices in African-American families can be described in terms of African influences, they are also shaped by Black parents' conceptions of the realities they and their children face in America: white racism and economic oppression. The Black mother must prepare her child to take on

> the appropriate sex and age roles (which by historical and philosophical definition are flexible, interchangeable and fluid) as well as the racial role (which by social and

political definition are ones of resistence, suspicion and caution).

Black child-rearing must resolve a basic conflict that exists between the European world-view and the African world-view. Dr. Nobles (1975) describes these orientations as each possessing a "set of guiding principles, dominant values and customs and . . . behavioral and mental dispositions of a particular people." He describes the African ethos as being "survivial of the tribe" and "oneness with nature." The cultural values associated with this world view are cooperation, interdependence and collective responsibility. In contrast, the Euro-American ethos emphasizes the "survival of the fittest" and control over nature." The cultural values associated with this world-view are "competition," "individualism," and "independence." Dr. Nobles states that the role of the Black family has been to mediate these two opposing world-views.

An interesting example comes to mind that highlights the role of Black women in reconciling opposing world-views. As a girl scout we were taught service-oriented courtesies such as helping the elderly across streets and giving our seats up to people who were our seniors on an overcrowded bus. I recall being on a bus trip downtown with a girlfriend and her mother, who was our girl scout leader. We were seated together and hit upon the idea that we should give some white ladies our seats since they were our elders. My girlfriend's mother sharply reprimanded us and instructed us to sit in the next available seatsand remain there. Even though this was Columbus, Ohio, and we were not struggling over segregated buses, I'm sure that the bus was symbolic of the struggle over

segregated transportation in the South and that accounted for her strong reaction. However, the sharp distinction that this mother drew, without explanation was that those girl scout principles were nice, but they were not to be implemented in a situation where they conflicted with racial folkways and made it appear that we were deferring to white people.

There is a duality of socialization required for Black people. Black children have to be prepared to imitate the "hip", "cool" behavior of the culture in which they live and at the same time take on those behaviors that are needed in order to be upwardly mobile. Lawrence Levine (1977) has offered an explaration for the persistence of Black language in the face of the strong pressure to conform to standard English.

> Living in the midst of a hostile and repressive white society, Black people found in language an important means of promoting and maintaining a sense of group unity and cohesion. Thus, while the appropriateness and usefulness of speaking Standard English in certain situations was understood, within the group, there were frequently pressures to speak the vernacular. (p.133)

Levine quotes a New Yorker who described the tension many Blacks perceived between peer group loyalty and the demands of the outside society.

> When I was small and going to school, if you talked that way (Standard English), the kids would kid you, but we had a few kids that would do it, and we always kid them. . . There was a girl who was always very proper. . . so, she'd always walk up and say, "Pardon me." We'd all laugh, we knew it was correct, but we'd still laugh. Today, she end up successful (p. 153).

Levine stated further that:

> The lames might be laughed at within the group, but it was they who often had the better chance of mobility and success without. Black children hardly had mastered socialization to the behavior patterns and language patterns of their own

> group before they learned its disadvantages and low status in the larger culture.
>
> Thus, for Black Americans, as for other minority groups in the society, the socialization process increasingly became a dual one: an attempt to live both within and outside the group. (p. 153)

Black women have, in many cases, had to ignore white child-rearing norms which are irrelevant to the existential situation of their children. White teachers never cease to be amazed when they are teaching children not to fight and to tell the teacher if someone hits them and a Black child reports that his parents told him to hit anybody back immediately who hits him. The white teacher has no conception of the kind of reality a Black child has to face. There very well may be no one around to tell and a child must be able to defend himself from attack.

The Black woman has made her home a santuary in which she has taken some of the sting out of many of the painful realities of the Black experience. She has ministered to the needs of her man, her children, other women's children and the community. It is to "my woman," "my momma," that men and children have turned to have mended the wounds inflicted by this society.

Black women have been challenged to foster positive self concept development in their children. Black mothers have kept many a child going with, "you're just as good as anybody else." It is Black parents who have soothed the anxieties that arise in Black children when they engage in competition or social comparison with white children.

Another important area to investigate is the strong motivation to achieve that is transmitted to Black children. Black parents have always stressed to Black children the importance of

excelling white children in behavior and performance because falling short would reflect unfavorably upon the group. As a child, I can recall being given very strict guidelines for behavior on the bus or in public because for me to be loud and boisterous would make white people feel that all Blacks were that way.

Robert Hill has identified a strong achievement orientation as a strength of Black families. He cites as evidence the fact that most of the Black youths in college come from families who were not college educated. This suggests that many Black parents are sacrificing to provide a college education for their children that they never had.

A study was conducted this year by Temple University to determine what life looks like for an elementary school child. An interesting finding was that more than 75% of the Black children and 66% of the whites said that their mother wants them to be "one of the best students in the class."

Let us consider the second category of child-rearing practices. These practices are traceable to an African heritage.

Let us turn our attention to the strong religious orientation of Black child-rearing. Na'im Akbar observed that Black women "didn't know nothin' 'bout Dr. Spock, but they did know the Bible --'raise up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it.'"

As Robert Hill points out, even though the strong religious orientation of Black families is widely discussed, it has almost never been empirically documented. Furthermore, Hill's and other discussions of the Black church focus primarily upon the political role of the church during slavery and the civil rights movement.

The church's economic leadership is demonstrated by the leadership of Rev. Leon Sullivan and Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Other studies of the Black church focus on the emotional quality of the services and the spiritual release the parishioners receive as they dream of "pie in the sky by and by".

However, very little attention has been given to the role of the Black church as a socializing institution. W.E.B. DuBois (1899) has produced one of the most significant works that examines that role of the Black church.

DuBois states that the Black church is a center of social intercourse to a degree unknown in white churches. He describes the life of an individual or family that is closely involved in the church as being somehow different than those who do not have that involvement. Church membership is not limited to Sunday morning contact at worship services. It provides children and adults with a peer group. The organizations and activities of the church give Black people an opportunity to provide leadership and exhibit and develop competencies that are not available in the broader society. Thus, we have a woman who is a domestic worker all week, who at church is the president of the missionary society. Or, we have a man who is a janitor all week but at church is a member of the Trustee Board and obtains experience in handling a budget and develops expertise in financial matters.

Comparable experiences are provided for children growing up in the church. Entertainment and athletics are two of the means by which Black youths have been able to achieve wealth and enhanced status. However, little recognition is given to the fact that the church is the training ground for Black musicians. Children gain

experience and training singing in church choirs. Some move into semi-secular groups such as gospel groups and others move directly into rhythm and blues. A case in point is Aretha Franklin, who is a preacher's daughter, Isaac Hayes, The Staple Singers and countless others.

So, the church is the hub of social life for those involved. Clearly Black women participate in the largest numbers in church worship and activities. Often the question is raised of how Black women who are single can manage so well in raising their children alone. Well, the answer is that they are not alone. The church provides a kind of extended family fellowship which provides other significant adults to relate to the children as well as material and human resources to the family.

The realms of feeling and affect and the cognitive processes arising from interpersonal relations may have important implications for Black people. Research suggests that Black people are a very emotional people. Some scholars have suggested that the emotion-charged, people-oriented quality of Black expression is a part of an African heritage:

> Knowledge in Western societies is largely derived from such propositions as "I think, therefore, I am." The non-Western heritage of Afro-Americans suggests that knowledge stems from the proposition that, "I feel therefore I think, therefore I am." (Dixon and Foster, 1971, p. 18.)

> The uniqueness of Black culture can be explained in that it is a culture whose emphasis is on the nonverbal. . . in Black culture, it is the experience that counts, not what is said. (Lester, 1969, p. 87)

This does not mean that Black people don't think or conceptualize their experience symbolically; rather, these scholars suggest

that intellectual analysis disconnected from feelings leads to incomplete knowledge of the world. (Haskins and Butts, 1973)

Many research studies have found Black children to be more feeling-oriented, people-oriented and more proficient at non-verbal communication than white children. It is important to determine the implications of this on their cognitive development. (Gitters, Black and Mostofsky, 1972, pp. 63-78)

Research has suggested that white children are very object-oriented. That is, they have numerous opportunities to manipulate objects and discover properties and relationships. Consequently, this society's educational system is very object-oriented. Classrooms are filled with educational hardware and technology--books, listening stations, learning centers, televisions, programmed instruction, learning kits and so forth.

Research with Black children in contrast has found them to be very people-oriented. Most Black children grow up in large families where they have a great deal of human interaction. This is an interesting aspect of African culture. While traveling in Africa, I was interested in the kinds of dolls with which the children play. I observed that African children don't play with dolls, they play with their mother's babies! This high degree of people orientation may account for the indifferentness with which some Black children regard books and devices. It may be that this cultural trait may need to be acknowledged with the result being more human interaction in the learning process.

The work of Virginia Young (1970, p. 276) is notable in providing evidence about child-rearing practices that influence

this "people orientation."

> Even though household composition varies widely in the Black community, each is almost certain to contain many different types of people of all ages to hold and play with the baby. In many cases, the physical closeness between infants and adults is reinforced by the fact that they are often observed to sleep with their parents or either parent alone. There is a kind of rhythm found between eating and napping with short periods of each activity found with frequent repetition. This rhythm is very different from the disciplined long span of attention cultivated in middle-class child- rearing and expected in schools (p. 276).

Because the babies are held so much of the time, there is a direct response to urination and bowel movements. Hence, from an early age, there is an association in the infant's mind between these functions and a response from the mother. Consequently, when the mother seeks to toilet train the child (in the early and stringent manner that has been observed in the Black community), the child is accustomed to her direct involvement in this process. In contrast, the transition is more startling for middle-class American infants whose functions have typically occurred alone. The mother begins to interfere with the bowel and bladder functions after many months of paying no attention to them. There is greater continuity in the behavior of Black mothers (p. 278).

Young contrasts the highly personal interaction with the low object orientation found in the Black families. She noticed that few objects were given to the babies. The only type observed were some plastic toys that may have been picked up in the supermarket while shopping. Also, when babies reached to grasp an object or feel a surface, they were often redirected to feeling the holder's face or engaged in a game of "rubbing faces" as a substitute. This

inhibition of exploration is possible because:

> there are always eyes on the baby and idle hands to take away the forbidden objects and then distract the frustrated baby. The personal is thus often substituted for the impersonal. (pp. 279-280)

It has been reported that there is a minimal amount of verbal exchange in lower-class families. Young observes that this is because of the abundance of communication in other forms. She observed the people to look deeply into each other's eyes, not speaking, but seeming to communicate fully. She suggests that parents use this to impress a point on a child. It has been noted that Black people avoid meeting the eyes of whites and this has been interpreted as a gesture of nonequality. However, Young suggests that it may, instead be a gesture of noncommunicativeness, in view of the extensive communication through looking into the eyes within the Black group. Other forms of nonverbal communication are the mother's caressing of the baby and children sitting in a circle rubbing bare feet. Young also notes what she calls a "mutuality" in family relations exhibited in remarks that pass between mothers and children:

> 'I'm tired,' the three year-old girl complains. 'I'm tired too,' her mother responds. 'I want some ice cream,' the eight year-old says wistfully as the ice cream truck passes. 'I want some too,' is the mother's way of saying no. This echoing of words and tone of voice is a common speech pattern. One does not see mothers and children clash and contend. (p. 286)

Young concludes that there are distinctive cultural styles that provide the milieu for the personality formation of Black children.

Let us now consider characteristics present in the socialization of Afro-American males. Virginia Young has noted that there is an

early entry into the children's gang by Black children. Usually by the age of three a child must step down from "the throne" to either begin assisting with a younger child or to enter the group of older children. This process is more complete for male children. Socialization is taken over at an earlier age for males by the peer group or older brothers. There are several areas in which the male must become proficient. One is that he must learn to walk. Black people are a very rhythmic people and the way in which one moves expresses power or weakness through control of one's body. The special walk that Black males must master has been called "the pimp" or the "ditty bop". By the age of eight, a boy must create and perfect a distinctive way of moving his body. Even though he can use older boys in the community as models, he still must design a way of walking that is distinctively his own. This is called "getting your pimp together."

Another skill that is generally taught by the peer group (with supplementary help from fathers) is athletic prowess. Competitive sports are very important in Afro-American culture. Competency in sports is a manhood rite and is very important to one's status in the peer group.

Sexual competence is generally taught by the peer group. Most Black males begin sexual exploration by age ten and no later than thirteen. They are judged by their peer group on the basis of their success at seduction.

Another challenge for the Black male is to become street-wise. This includes learning to fight. Most fighting instruction comes from within the family from the father or older brothers. The peer group is the scene of practice for those skills imparted in the family.

A part of street-wise behavior is police-avoidance. In research I conducted to determine the racial attitudes of Black preschool children (Hale, 1974), I noticed that Black preschool males tended to associate white people with the police. When asked whether they liked white people, many of the males responded that they did not like white people because the police "like to fight," ". . . like to kill people," ". ... will put me in jail." One explanation for their attitudes may be police avoidance behavior that male children learn from older peers on the street. However, not to be overlooked is the fact that Black mothers and fathers have the keen awareness that policemen watch Black children more than white children and are more prone to arrest and detain them. So, the socialization they give their child has had to include attitudes and strategies that would enhance his survival in a hostile environment.

Black males are generally given early responsibility to earn income for special needs of their own, (like buying a bicycle) or to contribute support to the family. Most boys by the age of eight years old have newspaper routes, grass to cut, or some other part-time job.

One of the challenges that the Black male must face is the conflicting images of masculinity that predominate within the Afro-American community and the image that predominates in the broader society. This conflict grows out of the duality of socialization that I mentioned earlier. However, it is particularly acute for Black males. The Black male between the ages of 8-15 is struggling to formulate an integrated conception of masculinity. The Afro-American culture projects a hip-walking, cool-talking model of

masculinity. Dr. Ernie Smith of the University of California states that often Black males reject models of Black professional men because their behaviors and mannerisms are considered effeminate since they do not reflect the raunchy macho of the ghetto. Dr. Smith states further that some boys feel that they are flirting with homosexuality if they give in to the pressures of the school to exhibit behaviors they consider feminine.

An important manhood rite in the Black community is "playing the dozens." This is an activity engaged in primarily by males in which usually two opponents dual verbally. Usually they make derogatory comments about the person and other family members (usually the mother). The performance of each player is appreciated and judged by the group who urges them on. This is called a manhood rite because it serves an important function. The boy must master several important competencies in order to be a good player. He first of all must control his emotions. Here, in the presence of his friends, terribly derogatory statements are made about his mother who is near and dear to him. He must suppress his emotional reaction to what has been said, so that he can think quickly and counter with an ever more clever slur upon his opponent's mother. It is my contention that controlling one's emotions is a process that is emphasized in the socialization of Black males. Following are a few examples of the dozens:

Your mother so old she got spider webs under her arms.

You keep on talking 'til you make me think
Your daddy was a bulldog, your mammy was a mink...
You keep on talking 'til you make me mad
I'll tell you 'bout the troubles that your sister had.

> Your house is so small, the roaches have to walk sideways through the hallways (Levine, 1977, p. 352).

Let us now consider characteristics present in the socialization of Afro-American females.

Afro-American females have a very strong motherhood orientation. This may be accounted for by the fact that girls are given early responsibility for the care of siblings. Usually, the girls are given substantial household responsibilities but are not expected to earn income outside of the home. In the instances where the girls have jobs, it is usually during adolescence when they babysit or perform other domestic duties.

Facial beauty per se is not emphasized in the socialization of Black females. Facial beauty is de-emphasized because the standards of beauty that are set forth by the broader society are based upon a white standard of beauty. Along with a de-emphasis on facial beauty is a strong emphasis on personal uniqueness. Style is very important in the Black community. It is not only what you do, but <u>how</u> you do it. Tom Kochman has described an important difference in personality development in the Black and white communities. In the Black community, one is admired for personal attributes rather than status or office. One is admired for his verbal ability, personality, wit, strength, intelligence, speed and so forth. As Black people have often held jobs which offered less power and prestige, they have acquired prestige within the group through the development of personal attributes. Kochman feels that the high valuation of the person, at least in part, is an adaptation to conditions of marginality and powerlessness. Consequently, Black females are not judged primarily in relationship to white standards

of beauty. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of sexuality, style and personal distinctiveness. There is a kind of sexuality that characterizes the Black female that is distinctive. There is not a lot of attention given to beauty potions and cosmetics. But considerable attention is given to clothes and the rhythm with which she walks and dances. Femaleness in the Black culture is validated by the feedback she receives regarding her sexuality from boys.

Black females also consider bearing children as a validation of their femaleness. Consequently, there is a very positive attitude toward childbirth. This validation function may provide an explanation for the disproportionate number of births by girls in their early teens.

A study that was conducted by Diana Baumrind at the University of California, Berkeley, identified several family patterns of Black and white preschool children. She defined the parents of Black girls as being in the authoritarian-rejecting category. The parents rated high on firm enforcement of rules. Black girls were expected to be more mature and conforming. The fathers did not promote nonconformity and were authoritarian in their practices. These socialization practices, she said are authoritarian by white standards and would be regarded as change-worthy by many child-rearing experts. The findings of her study suggest the opposite possibility. They suggest that the child-rearing practices which characterize Black families benefit their daughters.

Black females, she notes, by comparison with white females appear to possess outstanding competencies. In this study, the

Black daughters of authoritarian parents were exceptionally independent and at ease, in the novel, nursery school setting. This is consistent with the observations of the researcher that many of the Black preschool girls carry considerable responsibility for the care of younger siblings at home, play aggressively at nursery school and yet sit quietly and attentively when accompanying their mothers to an evening nursery school meeting. By white standards, these young Black girls demonstrate unusual social maturity and a wide range of adaptive behavior. She goes on to suggest that something must be wrong with the pejorative connotation that is being given to Black child-rearing practices. She suggests further that authoritarian child-rearing practices may have as their objective to develop toughness and self-sufficiency in Black girls and is perceived by them not as rejecting, but as nurturant caretaking. She also found that the educational aspirations of Black families was higher for their girls than those of white families.

Black females are imbued with a strong work orientation. Their socialization does not prepare them to expect a pampered existence as a housewife in a vine-covered cottage. Regardless of their social class, they are taught that they will probably be expected to contribute to the support of the family. Andrew Young once was questioned about the fabulous houses Blacks in Atlanta own. He said that they were indeed fabulous, but everyone in the houses were working to support them! One of the strengths of Black families that was identified by Robert Hill is the fact that Black women can be counted on to contribute to the support of the family. This strong work orientation has its roots in the socialization in early childhood.

Hope J. Leichter (1973, p. 244) develops the concept of educative style. She uses the term educative style to include school and nonschool institutions. There should be an exploration of the "cultural distance" in educational values between parents and teachers. To what extent does the school reinforce, complement, contradict, or inhibit the efforts of the family and community; and to what extent does the family and community reinforce, complement, contradict or inhibit the efforts of the school. In her opinion, note should be taken of the fact that children learn from many persons as well as school teachers. Educators should gain an understanding of how the child moves through and utilizes diverse educative experiences over a lifetime (p. 239).

Leichter warns against the current trend of determining educational policy by considering single variables and treating aspects of education in isolation. The concept of educative style encompasses the total social (cultural) situation of the individual. She describes the confusion that has resulted in these disjointed considerations of the influences of the culture on education. An example is that one group of policy makers in early childhood education will advocate removing the lower-income child from the home and providing compensatory experiences; and others will advocate subsidizing the mothers to <u>remain at home</u> with their children instead of working. Some of the extremes of this kind of debate could be averted if some theoretical perspective could postulate the best combination of family, community, and school effort.

Leichter observes:

> In designing programs and considering questions of the most effective points for educational intervention, the

> issue of how individuals combine educative experiences and the styles by which they educate themselves, both in early childhood and later in life is clearly fundamental (p. 249).

There is a need for further investigation of the mother-child relationship among Black Americans. This research should have strong implications for educating Black children, particularly in early childhood settings. There is a need for greater continuity between the behavior of the mother and the behavior of the teacher. One of the reasons white teachers have idfficulty motivating and disciplining Black children is the cultural dissonance that occurs when they behave differently from the way the children expect authority figures to behave. Black mothers tend to be more firm and physical in their discipline than white mothers. Consequently, when the child encounters a white teacher in school practicing all of the techniques she learned in college, the children "run all over her" and are labeled discipline problems.

Another example of cultural dissonance may occur when Black children are placed in "open education" settings that were designed with white middle-class children in mind. As pointed out earlier, in many cases, Black children do not perform well when they are expected to learn independently using educational hardware. They have the need for interaction with the teacher and other children because they are accustomed to learning being associated with intense interpersonal interaction in the family.

Through careful study of the child-rearing of Black mothers and the resultant learning styles of Black children, we may obtain important information on how to achieve continuity between the home, school and community in educating our children.

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